

Patent Claims:

1. Coupling piece for joining two said containers that are stacked one atop the others (35, 36), particularly onboard ships, at their said corner fittings, comprising a said stop plate (21) and a said coupling projection (22, 23) on each side of the said stop plate (21), of which the first said coupling projection (22) can be placed on the said corner fitting of one said container (36) and the said other coupling projection (23) is provided with a said locking catch (28, 46, 54) for locking inside a said corner fitting of the said other container (35), **characterized in that** the said locking catch (28, 46, 54), when viewed in the longitudinal direction of the said containers (35, 36), is arranged laterally on the said other coupling projection (23).

2. Coupling piece in accordance with claim 1, characterized in that the length (l) of the said other coupling projection (23) is slightly shorter than the length of a said elongated hole (33) of the associated corner fitting of the said other container (35).

3. Coupling piece in accordance with claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the maximum width (b) of the said locking catch (28, 46, 54) is slightly less than the width [typo in original - Tr.Ed.] of the said elongated hole (33) of the associated corner fitting of the said other container (35).

4. Coupling piece in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 3, characterized in that said leading edges (39) of the said other coupling projection (23) have a contour corresponding to the contour of the said elongated hole (33), and particularly an arc-shaped contour.

5. Coupling piece in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 4, characterized in that the said coupling projection (23) has a said lead-in taper (29) under the said locking catch (28, 46, 54).

6. Coupling piece in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 5, characterized in that a said lead-in chamfer (30) is arranged on the long side (L) facing away from the said locking catch (28, 46, 54) at the junction between the said coupling projection (23) and the said stop plate (21).

7. Coupling piece in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 5, characterized in that the said lead-in chamfer (30) has an angle corresponding to the said chamfer (32) at the said elongated hole (33) of the container corner fitting [German grammatically incorrect - Tr.Ed.].

8. Coupling piece in accordance with claim 6, characterized in that the said lead-in chamfer (30) is first provided with a said chamfer (52) corresponding to the chamfer at the said elongated hole (33) and, under the said elongated hole (33), a said chamfer (53) having an angle that is flatter compared to the said chamfer (52).

9. Coupling piece in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 7, characterized in that the said locking catch (28) has a said sloping shoulder (34) on its top side.

10. Coupling piece in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 7, characterized in that the said locking catch (46) is provided with a said approximately horizontal top side (47).

11. Coupling piece in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 9, characterized in that the said

locking catch (46) is provided with a said side wall (48) directed sloping inwardly.

12. Coupling piece in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 11, characterized in that the said locking catch (54) is designed as movable against the said coupling projection (23).

13. Coupling piece in accordance with claim 12, characterized in that the said locking catch (54) is designed such that it is cross-slidable against the force of a said spring (55).

14. Arrangement of said containers (35, 36) stacked one atop the other, and particularly onboard ships, which are joined with one another with said coupling pieces (20, 45) at their corner fittings, characterized in that the said containers (35, 36) are joined with one another at least at the corner fittings of a front side of said containers (35, 36) with a said coupling piece (20, 45) in accordance with claims 1 through 9 each

15. Arrangement in accordance with claim 14, characterized in that the said containers (35, 36) are joined with one another at all their corner fittings with a said coupling piece (20) in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 7.

16. Arrangement in accordance with claim 15, characterized in that the said locking catches (28) of the said coupling pieces (20), which are assigned to the said (front) corner fittings (43) on one of the front walls of the said containers (35, 36), when viewed in the longitudinal direction of the said containers (35, 36), point in a lateral direction, and the said locking catches (28) of the said coupling pieces (20), which are assigned to the said (rear) corner fittings (44) on the other of the front walls of

the said containers (35, 36), point in the opposite direction.

17. Method for joining said containers (35, 36) stacked one atop the other, particularly onboard ships, with said coupling pieces (20, 45) in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 9, characterized in that the said upper container (36) is rotated about its vertical axis during the coupling and/or uncoupling with the lower container.

18. Method in accordance with claim 17, characterized in that the said upper container (36) is rotated about its vertical axis during the coupling and/or uncoupling by means of the shape of the said coupling pieces (20, 45).

19. Method for joining said containers (35, 36) stacked one atop the other, particularly onboard ships, with said coupling pieces (20, 45) in accordance with one of the claims 1 through 9, characterized in that the said upper container (36) is offset laterally during the coupling and/or uncoupling with the lower container.

20. Method in accordance with claim 19, characterized in that the said upper container (36) is offset laterally during the coupling and/or uncoupling due to the shape of the said coupling pieces (28, 45).